

# Arthur Conan Doyle



**Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle** KStJ,  
DL (22 May 1859 – 7 July 1930) was a  
British writer and physician, most noted for  
creating the fictional detective Sherlock  
Holmes and writing stories about him which  
are generally considered milestones in the  
field of crime fiction.

He is also known for writing the fictional  
adventures of a second character he invented,  
Professor Challenger, and for popularising  
the mystery of the *Mary Celeste*. He was a  
prolific writer whose other works include  
fantasy and science fiction stories, plays,  
romances, poetry, non-fiction and historical  
novels.



# Nam

Doyle is often referred to as "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle" or simply "Conan Doyle" (implying that Conan is part of a compound surname, as opposed to a given middle name). His baptism entry in the register of St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh gives "Arthur Ignatius Conan" as his given names, and "Doyle" as his surname. It also names Michael Conan as his godfather. The cataloguers of the British Library and the Library of Congress treat "Doyle" alone as his surname.



Steven Doyle, editor of the *Baker Street Journal*, has written: "Conan was Arthur's middle name. Shortly after he graduated from high school he began using Conan as a sort of surname. But technically his last name is simply 'Doyle'." When knighted, he was gazetted as Doyle, not under the compound Conan Doyle. Nevertheless, the actual use of a compound surname is demonstrated by the fact that Doyle's second wife was known as "Jean Conan Doyle" rather than "Jean Doyle".



# Early Life

Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was born on 22 May 1859 at 11 Picardy Place, Edinburgh, Scotland. His father, Charles Altamont Doyle, was English, of Irish Catholic descent, and his mother, Mary (née Foley), was Irish Catholic. His parents married in 1855. In 1864 the family dispersed due to Charles's growing alcoholism and the children were temporarily housed across Edinburgh. In 1867, the family came together again and lived in squalid tenement flats at 3 Sciennes Place. Doyle's father died in 1893, in the Crichton Royal, Dumfries, after many years of psychiatric illness.

Supported by wealthy uncles, Doyle was sent to the Jesuit preparatory school Hodder Place, Stonyhurst, at the age of nine (1868–70). He then went on to Stonyhurst College until 1875. From 1875 to 1876, he was educated at the Jesuit school Stella Matutina in Feldkirch, Austria. He later rejected the Catholic faith and became an agnostic. He also later became a spiritualist mystic.



# Literary

## career

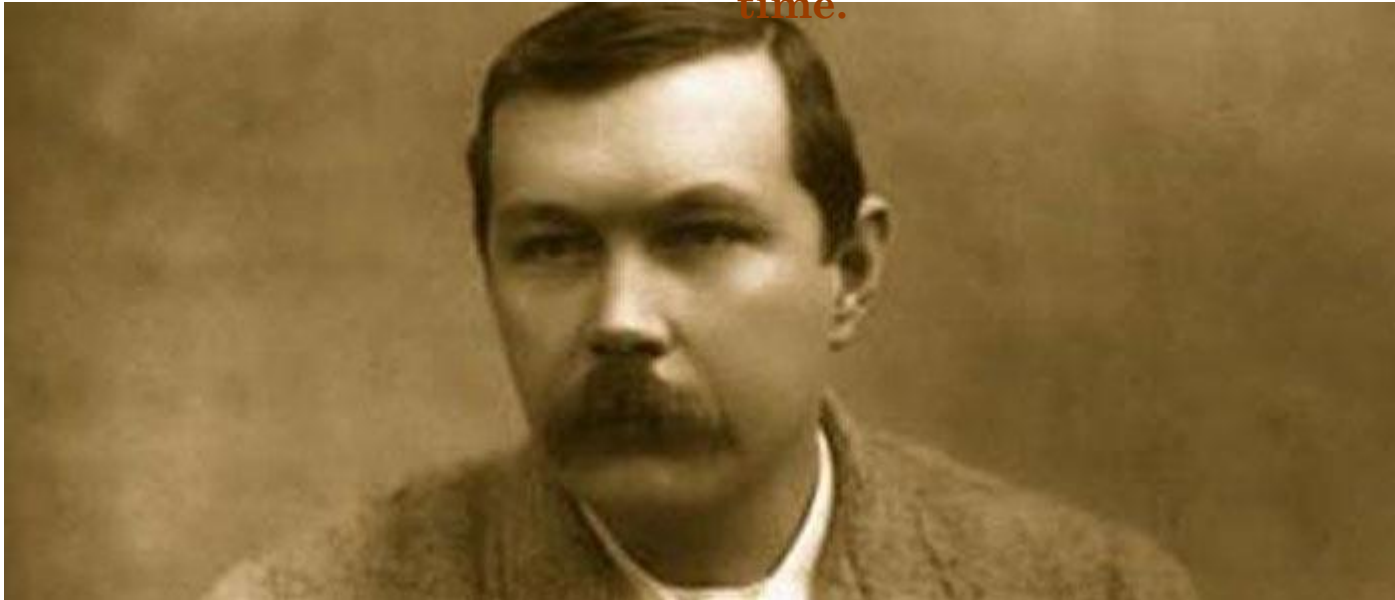
Doyle struggled to find a publisher for his work. His first work featuring Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, *A Study in Scarlet*, was taken by Ward Lock & Co on 20 November 1886, giving Doyle £25 (£2500 today) for all rights to the story. The piece appeared one year later in the *Beeton's Christmas Annual* and received good reviews in *The Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald*.

Holmes was partially modelled on his former university teacher Joseph Bell. In 1892, in a letter to Bell, Doyle wrote, "It is most certainly to you that I owe Sherlock Holmes ... round the centre of deduction and inference and observation which I have heard you inculcate I have tried to build up a man." and, in his 1924 autobiography, he remarked, "It is no wonder that after the study of such a character [viz., Bell] I used and amplified his methods when in later life I tried to build up a scientific detective who solved cases on his own merits and not through the folly of the criminal. Robert Louis Stevenson was able, even in faraway Samoa, to recognise the strong similarity between Joseph Bell and Sherlock Holmes: "My compliments on your very ingenious and very interesting adventures of Sherlock Holmes. ... can this be my old friend Joe Bell?" Other authors sometimes suggest additional influences—for instance, the famous Edgar Allan Poe character C. Auguste Dupin. Dr. (John) Watson owes his surname, but not any other obvious characteristic, to a Portsmouth medical colleague of Doyle's, Dr James Watson.<sup>1</sup>



A sequel to *A Study in Scarlet* was commissioned and *The Sign of the Four* appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine* in February 1890, under agreement with the Ward Lock company. Doyle felt grievously exploited by Ward Lock as an author new to the publishing world and he left them. Short stories featuring Sherlock Holmes were published in the *Strand Magazine*. Doyle wrote the first five Holmes short stories from his office at 2 Upper Wimpole Street (then known as Devonshire Place), which is now marked by a memorial plaque.<sup>1</sup>

Doyle's attitude towards his most famous creation was ambivalent. In November 1891 he wrote to his mother: "I think of slaying Holmes,... and winding him up for good and all. He takes my mind from better things." His mother responded, "You won't! You can't! You mustn't!" In an attempt to deflect publishers' demands for more Holmes stories, he raised his price to a level intended to discourage them, but found they were willing to pay even the large sums he asked. As a result, he became one of the best-paid authors of his time.



# Personal

## Life

In 1885 Doyle married Mary Louise (sometimes called "Touie") Hawkins, the youngest daughter of J. Hawkins, of Minsterworth, Gloucestershire, and sister of one of Doyle's patients. She suffered from tuberculosis and died on 4 July 1906. The following year he married Jean Elizabeth Leckie, whom he had first met and fallen in love with in 1897. He had maintained a platonic relationship with Jean while his first wife was still alive, out of loyalty to her. Jean died in London on 27 June 1940.

Doyle fathered five children. He had two with his first wife: Mary Louise (28 January 1889 – 12 June 1976) and Arthur Alleyne Kingsley, known as Kingsley (15 November 1892 – 28 October 1918). He also had three with his second wife: Denis Percy Stewart (17 March 1909 – 9 March 1955), second husband of Georgian Princess Nina Mdivani; Adrian Malcolm (19 November 1910 – 3 June 1970); and Jean Lena Annette (21 December 1912 – 18 November 1997).<sup>1</sup>





# Death



Doyle was found clutching his chest in the hall of Windlesham Manor, his house in Crowborough, East Sussex, on 7 July 1930. He died of a heart attack at the age of 71. His last words were directed toward his wife: "You are wonderful." At the time of his death, there was some controversy concerning his burial place, as he was avowedly not a Christian, considering himself a Spiritualist. He was first buried on 11 July 1930 in Windlesham rose garden.

He was later reinterred together with his wife in Minstead churchyard in the New Forest, Hampshire. Carved wooden tablets to his memory and to the memory of his wife, originally from the church at Minstead, are on display as part of a Sherlock Holmes exhibition at Portsmouth Museum. That inscription reads, "Blade straight/Steel true/Arthur Conan Doyle/Born May 22nd 1859/Died July 7th 1930"

The epitaph on his gravestone in the churchyard reads, in part: "Steel true/Blade straight/Arthur Conan Doyle/Knight/Patriot, Physician, and man of letters".

Undershaw, the home near Hindhead, Haslemere, which Doyle had built and lived in between October 1897 and September 1907, was a hotel and restaurant from 1924 until 2004. It was then bought by a developer and stood empty while conservationists and Doyle fans fought to preserve it.

In 2012 the High Court ruled the redevelopment permission be quashed because proper procedure had not been followed, but it is now due to become part of the Stepping Stones school for children with disabilities and additional needs.

A statue honours Doyle at Crowborough Cross in Crowborough, where he lived for 23 years. There is a statue of Sherlock Holmes in Picardy Place,

